



General Assembly

February Session, 2010

Raised Bill No. 5360

LCO No. 1656

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Referred to Committee on Select Committee on Children

Introduced by:
(KID)

AN ACT CONCERNING CHILDREN IN THE RECESSION.

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives in General Assembly convened:

1 Section 1. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) (a) There is established a
2 children in the recession leadership team to implement and coordinate
3 the state's emergency response to children affected by the recession.
4 The team shall consist of the following members, or their designees:
5 the Commissioners of Public Health, Education, Children and
6 Families, Social Services, Higher Education and Developmental
7 Services, the Labor Commissioner and the Chairman of the Child
8 Poverty and Prevention Council, established pursuant to section 4-67x
9 of the general statutes. The leadership team may meet at any time,
10 except that such team shall meet monthly if (1) the unemployment rate
11 is greater than eight per cent, or (2) there is a decline in the gross
12 domestic product of more than two per cent since the preceding
13 quarter.

14 (b) The children in the recession leadership
15 team shall work in a coordinated manner across government to
16 implement an emergency response, within available appropriations,

17 that (1) mitigates the long-term impact of economic recessions on
18 children; (2) provides appropriate assistance and resources to families
19 to minimize the number of children who enter poverty and the impact
20 of the recession that extends into adulthood through lost earnings and
21 poor health; and (3) prevents human and fiscal costs of recessions,
22 including foreclosures, child hunger, family violence, school failure,
23 youth runaways, homelessness, child abuse and neglect. The
24 leadership team shall develop and implement policies, practices and
25 procedures that reduce the impact of the recession on children, in both
26 fiscal and personal terms, through (A) improved program and policy
27 coordination; (B) cross-agency strategic planning; (C) increased
28 efficiencies and access points for agency clients; (D) streamlined
29 communications for families needing to access state services; (E) short-
30 term changes in procedures as needed to decrease family crisis and
31 poverty; (F) coordinated outreach; and (G) federal funds
32 maximization, including all opportunities for employability and
33 education.

34 (c) For purposes of this section, the children in the recession
35 leadership team shall perform, within available appropriations, the
36 following functions to mitigate the impact of the recession on children:
37 (1) Share resource information and strategic planning to address the
38 immediate human and fiscal costs arising from the recession; (2) train
39 pertinent personnel on the availability of services, access points and
40 interventions across agencies, including child trauma treatment, to
41 help families reach and utilize necessary services; (3) link job training
42 and education pathways and opportunities; (4) create and implement a
43 plan to identify and support families who are at increased risk of abuse
44 or neglect in the declining economy; (5) develop and implement efforts
45 to coordinate outreach, increase and improve access, establish multiple
46 enrollment sites where feasible and in response to the urgent need for
47 services resulting from the recession, reduce current response times to
48 clients and new applicants for safety net programs, including, but not
49 limited to, the federal Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program, the
50 federal Special Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants and

51 Children, the temporary family assistance program, the child care
52 subsidy program, heating and rental assistance, eviction prevention
53 services and free and reduced preschool meal programs; (6) identify
54 regulations to be revised and procedures to be streamlined to increase
55 access to such programs; (7) maximize the availability of targeted case
56 management and intervention services; and (8) maximize all federal
57 opportunities in financing to assist families with jobs and services in
58 the recession.

59 (d) Not later than January 1, 2011, and biannually thereafter, a
60 representative of the children in the recession leadership team shall
61 appear before a joint meeting of the select committee of the General
62 Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to children and the
63 joint standing committees of the General Assembly having cognizance
64 of matters relating to appropriations and the budgets of state agencies
65 and human services and make an oral report on (1) progress in
66 implementing the provisions of this section, and (2) other government
67 actions taken to reduce the impact of the recession on children and
68 families in the state.

69 Sec. 2. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) (a) The Department of Social
70 Services, in partnership with the Labor Department and the
71 Departments of Education, Public Health and Children and Families,
72 shall seek, within available appropriations, to promote efficiency,
73 reduce costs and administrative error rates and simplify the
74 application process for families eligible for benefits by streamlining
75 and integrating public information and access to programs.

76 (b) For the purpose of subsection (a) of this section, the Department
77 of Social Services shall develop, within available appropriations, a plan
78 for a comprehensive state service approach that may include (1) a
79 single-point-of-entry procedure for state-funded programs and
80 services to provide information and access to eligible services through
81 whatever state agency entry point at which the client seeks
82 information, including the Departments of Social Services, Public

83 Health, Education and Children and Families, and the Labor
84 Department, and, including, but not limited to, the Supplemental
85 Nutrition Assistance Program, child care assistance, unemployment
86 and medical assistance and insurance; (2) the promotion of combined,
87 on-line application and enrollment processes for programs that serve
88 children or families; (3) the use of the Internet to develop and increase
89 public access to on-line screening tools, benefit calculators and on-line
90 applications that facilitate prompt access to programs and benefit
91 information; and (4) the promotion of access to direct assistance with
92 application and enrollment processes through community-based
93 organizations. Not later than January 31, 2011, the department shall
94 submit the plan to the joint standing committee of the General
95 Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to human services and
96 to the select committee of the General Assembly having cognizance of
97 matters relating to children. The department may establish a
98 partnership with philanthropic organizations to accomplish the
99 purposes and financing of this section.

100 (c) The Department of Social Services shall develop, within available
101 appropriations, and in accordance with the provisions of federal law, a
102 client-friendly and reasonable timeline within which applications shall
103 not be required to be resubmitted if a family recently applied for
104 services and changes in eligibility temporarily have altered the
105 application process or the program closed to applications and then
106 reopened.

107 Sec. 3. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) The Department of Social
108 Services, within available appropriations, shall seek to help parents
109 work, job train or look for employment while children are safe and
110 learning. The department shall (1) continue to accept applications and
111 provide benefits to eligible applicants to the child care subsidy
112 program, established pursuant to section 17b-749 of the general
113 statutes, at any time when the state unemployment rate is eight per
114 cent or higher; and (2) provide timely public notice if, for any reason,
115 the child care subsidy program is not available to all eligible families

116 or its eligibility or program status is altered. Any change in eligibility
117 or program terms shall be effective not less than sixty days after public
118 notice of such change. Funds available for the child care subsidy
119 program for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2010, shall be strictly and
120 fully utilized for child care purposes that enable parents to work and
121 children to thrive.

122 Sec. 4. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) (a) The Department of Social
123 Services, in collaboration with the Departments of Education, Children
124 and Families, Higher Education and Economic and Community
125 Development, shall seek, within available appropriations, to impede
126 homelessness, which increases insecurity, poor school performance
127 and behavioral problems for children, by (1) continuing the rental
128 assistance program allowing families to afford housing; (2) assuring
129 foreclosure prevention and mitigation through the Connecticut
130 Housing Finance Authority, the Connecticut Fair Housing Center and
131 the Department of Economic and Community Development; and (3)
132 providing incentives to towns that promote affordable housing.

133 (b) In the case where a family or youth is homeless, the Department
134 of Social Services, in collaboration with said departments and within
135 available appropriations, shall (1) ensure full utilization of the federal
136 McKinney-Vento Homeless Assistance Act to protect children falling
137 into homelessness from school failure and dropping out of school and
138 to improve access to higher education eligibility; (2) allocate existing
139 funding to ensure the availability of homeless shelters that accept
140 intact families or that assist families to find adequate alternative
141 arrangements that allow the family to remain together; (3) review
142 program eligibility requirements and other policies to ensure that
143 unaccompanied homeless children have access to critical services that
144 such children might otherwise have been prevented from receiving
145 due to age or guardianship requirements; and (4) work, in accordance
146 with the provisions of federal law, with appropriate state agencies to
147 effectuate short-term waivers of income garnishment by such state
148 agencies in order to protect children and families from hardship and

149 keep families together in cases where such waivers are deemed
150 appropriate by the commissioner of the department attempting to
151 secure a garnishment.

152 Sec. 5. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) The Department of Social
153 Services shall collaborate with the Departments of Public Health and
154 Education to decrease hunger resulting from the recession by
155 coordinating, within available appropriations, state-wide public access,
156 information and outreach, and promoting, within available
157 appropriations, cross-enrollment and collocation of entry points and
158 application processes for the federal Supplemental Nutrition
159 Assistance Program and the federal Special Supplemental Food
160 Program for Women, Infants and Children in order to improve
161 nutritional access for families, increase federal reimbursements and
162 diminish the effects of food insecurity on children's cognition,
163 behavior, developmental growth and educational achievement.

164 Sec. 6. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2010*) The Department of Education
165 shall administer, within available appropriations, a child nutrition
166 outreach program to increase participation in the federal School
167 Breakfast Program, federal Summer Food Service Program and federal
168 Child and Adult Care Food Program. The outreach program shall:

169 (1) Encourage schools to (A) participate in the federal School
170 Breakfast Program; (B) employ innovative breakfast service methods
171 where students eat their breakfast in their classrooms or elsewhere
172 after school starts, rather than only before school and only in the
173 cafeteria; and (C) apply to the in-classroom breakfast grant program
174 pursuant to section 10-215g of the general statutes; and

175 (2) (A) Encourage local and regional school districts to sponsor
176 Summer Food Service Program sites; (B) recruit other sponsors of such
177 sites; and (C) make grants to site sponsors to assist them in increasing
178 child participation;

179 (3) Encourage day care centers to participate in the Child and Adult

180 Care Food Program; and

181 (4) Publicize the availability of federally-funded child nutrition
182 programs throughout the state.

183 Sec. 7. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) (a) The Department of Social
184 Services shall maximize federal fund opportunities from the
185 Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Emergency Fund
186 established pursuant to the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act
187 P.L. 111-5, in order to assist families and workers facing
188 unemployment, housing crises, increasing debt, homelessness or other
189 hardships. The department shall seek to utilize:

190 (1) The nonrecurrent, short-term benefits category of the Temporary
191 Assistance for Needy Families Emergency Fund for eligible purposes,
192 including, but not limited to, housing, transportation, work expenses,
193 family safety, low-birth weight reduction, food and nutrition. The
194 benefits funded pursuant to this subdivision may include, but not be
195 limited to, mortgage assistance, eviction relief, car repair, work clothes,
196 domestic violence services, home visitation, on-the-job training and
197 TANF extensions for parents who are unable to find employment; and

198 (2) The subsidized employment category of the Temporary
199 Assistance for Needy Families Emergency Fund for eligible purposes,
200 including, but not limited to, youth employment programs and the
201 alleviation of specific labor shortages and state worker shortages
202 where the jobs created help families apply for state services.

203 (b) The department shall work with the private sector, including
204 philanthropic, business and nonprofit agencies as well as any
205 consortium of such groups, for eligible purposes and as third-party
206 participants to qualify for, access and maximize federal funding from
207 said emergency fund through donation, in-kind spending and training
208 of subsidized workers.

209 (c) The department shall implement the provisions of this section

210 within available resources.

211 Sec. 8. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) Not more than sixty days after
 212 the effective date of this section, the Department of Social Services,
 213 within available appropriations, shall establish a procedure for
 214 implementing the following modifications in the temporary assistance
 215 of needy families program whenever the state unemployment rate
 216 exceeds eight per cent: (1) The Jobs First program shall permit and
 217 encourage parents to pursue education and training and shall approve,
 218 as work activities, two-year and four-year degree programs; and (2)
 219 make the requirements for a third extension of temporary family
 220 assistance cash assistance, pursuant to section 17b-112 of the general
 221 statutes, the same as the requirements for a first or second extension.
 222 The department shall seek federal support to pay for such
 223 modifications through funds provided from the federal Temporary
 224 Assistance for Needy Families Emergency Fund.

225 Sec. 9. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) The Department of Public
 226 Health, within available appropriations and in collaboration with the
 227 Departments of Social Services and Education, shall endeavor to
 228 prevent the increase in low-birth-weight infants resulting from the
 229 recession, to reduce the cost to the state from unnecessary
 230 hospitalizations of such infants, as well as the health and cognitive
 231 injury to children resulting from such condition, and to decrease the
 232 growing racial disparity in the rates of occurrence of low-birth-weight
 233 infants by (1) maximizing coenrollment in the federal Special
 234 Supplemental Food Program for Women, Infants and Children and
 235 Medicaid for all eligible women; (2) encouraging tobacco cessation
 236 programs targeted to pregnant women; and (3) promoting the use of
 237 the centering pregnancy model of prenatal care. The department may
 238 recover the costs of implementing the provisions of this section
 239 through funds available from the Tobacco and Health Trust Fund
 240 established under section 4-28f of the general statutes and the federal
 241 Temporary Assistance for Needy Families Emergency Fund.

242 Sec. 10. (NEW) (*Effective July 1, 2010*) (a) As used in this section:

243 (1) "Eligible student" means (A) any student enrolled in an
244 accredited institution of higher education in this state; or (B) any
245 resident of this state enrolled in an accredited institution of higher
246 education; and

247 (2) "Qualifying loan" means a loan to an eligible student that is (A)
248 originated by a participating bank, credit union or other entity; (B)
249 subject to the participating bank's, credit union's or entity's
250 underwriting standards applicable to student loans; (C) subject to an
251 interest rate not exceeding six per cent per annum for loans; and (D)
252 disbursed not later than July 1, 2011.

253 (b) The Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management, within
254 available appropriations and in collaboration with the Department of
255 Higher Education, shall establish a partnership with Connecticut
256 banks, Connecticut credit unions or any other entities for the provision
257 of qualifying loans to eligible students who experience difficulty in
258 obtaining financing for post-secondary education because of more
259 restrictive underwriting criteria, reduced access to home equity loans
260 or decreased market value of homes.

261 (c) The Secretary of the Office of Policy and Management shall
262 establish, within available appropriations, a program to guarantee
263 qualifying loans pursuant to this section. Such program shall provide a
264 first-loss guarantee to participating banks, credit unions or other
265 entities not to exceed twenty per cent of the outstanding principal
266 amount of qualifying student loans originated by such banks, credit
267 unions or entities. The amount of any individual loan guaranteed by
268 the state shall not exceed twenty per cent of the original principal
269 balance thereof.

270 Sec. 11. (*Effective from passage*) The Commission on Children, within
271 available appropriations and in collaboration with the private sector,
272 shall research the viability of enacting a state children and the

273 recession fund that would provide funds and low-interest loans to
274 families facing short-term crisis in housing, utilities, hunger and
275 unemployment. Not later than January 1, 2011, the commission shall
276 report, in accordance with the provisions of section 11-4a of the general
277 statutes, its findings to the joint standing committee of the General
278 Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to appropriations and
279 the budgets of state agencies.

280 Sec. 12. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) The Commission on Children,
281 within available appropriations, shall coordinate information on youth
282 leadership opportunities that keep youth engaged in the community.
283 The commission shall inform the General Assembly and the public of
284 such opportunities.

285 Sec. 13. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) Not later than January 1, 2011,
286 and biannually thereafter, the Commissioner of Social Services shall
287 appear before a joint meeting of the select committee of the General
288 Assembly having cognizance of matters relating to children and the
289 joint standing committees of the General Assembly having cognizance
290 of matters relating to appropriations and the budgets of state agencies
291 and to human services and make an oral report on (1) the progress in
292 implementing the provisions of section 1 and sections 3 to 7, inclusive,
293 of this act, and (2) other government actions taken to reduce the impact
294 of the recession on children and families.

295 Sec. 14. (NEW) (*Effective from passage*) (a) The Department of Social
296 Services shall analyze the policies and interventions promoted
297 pursuant to section 1 and sections 3 to 7, inclusive, of this act utilizing
298 results-based accountability to determine their impact. The department
299 shall submit, on or before January 1, 2011, and annually thereafter, a
300 results-based accountability report card on such impact to the General
301 Assembly and the joint standing committee of the General Assembly
302 having cognizance of matters relating to appropriations and the
303 budgets of state agencies, in accordance with the provisions of section
304 11-4a of the general statutes.

305 (b) The Department of Education shall analyze the policies and
 306 interventions promoted pursuant to section 6 of this act utilizing
 307 results-based accountability to determine their impact. The department
 308 shall submit, on or before January 1, 2011, and annually thereafter, a
 309 results-based accountability report card on such impact to the General
 310 Assembly and the joint standing committee of the General Assembly
 311 having cognizance of matters relating to appropriations and the
 312 budgets of state agencies, in accordance with the provisions of section
 313 11-4a of the general statutes.

314 (c) The Department of Public Health shall analyze the policies and
 315 interventions promoted pursuant to section 9 of this act utilizing
 316 results-based accountability to determine their impact. The department
 317 shall submit, on or before January 1, 2011, and annually thereafter, a
 318 results-based accountability report card on such impact to the General
 319 Assembly and the joint standing committee of the General Assembly
 320 having cognizance of matters relating to appropriations and the
 321 budgets of state agencies, in accordance with the provisions of section
 322 11-4a of the general statutes.

This act shall take effect as follows and shall amend the following sections:		
Section 1	<i>from passage</i>	New section
Sec. 2	<i>from passage</i>	New section
Sec. 3	<i>from passage</i>	New section
Sec. 4	<i>from passage</i>	New section
Sec. 5	<i>from passage</i>	New section
Sec. 6	<i>July 1, 2010</i>	New section
Sec. 7	<i>from passage</i>	New section
Sec. 8	<i>from passage</i>	New section
Sec. 9	<i>from passage</i>	New section
Sec. 10	<i>July 1, 2010</i>	New section
Sec. 11	<i>from passage</i>	New section
Sec. 12	<i>from passage</i>	New section
Sec. 13	<i>from passage</i>	New section
Sec. 14	<i>from passage</i>	New section

Statement of Purpose:

To implement the recommendations of the task force on children in the recession.

[Proposed deletions are enclosed in brackets. Proposed additions are indicated by underline, except that when the entire text of a bill or resolution or a section of a bill or resolution is new, it is not underlined.]